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AN INSCRIBED ALTAR FROM THE ROMAN TEMPLE AT KADESH (UPPER GALILEE)

During the course of the first season of excavations of the Roman temple at Kadesh, in the Upper Galilee,¹⁾ an altar bearing a Greek dedicatory inscription was found in the southern section of the portico of the temple. The altar which is made of hard lime-stone was not discovered in situ and was not preserved in its entirety. The altar was preserved in a condition from which it was possible to distinguish an elongated body whose upper part ends in a wider cornice. It is still possible to make out the remains of two horns with an elaborate projection between them. The projection is separated from the horns by two grooves. Nothing remained of the incense surface nor of the base of the altar, and it is therefore difficult to reconstruct its entire height.²⁾ The back part of the altar is coarsely worked implying that it was placed against a wall. The facade of the altar, which bears the inscription, has a break from the top to bottom and only its left half has been preserved (0.255m.). If we take into account the length of the side of the body of the altar, which has been preserved in its entirety (0.51m.), we can assume that half of the inscription is missing.

The inscription which is incised in a round script consists of four lines. The first line is incised on the projection of the cornice and is completely separated from the remaining three lines, which are incised on the body of the altar.³⁾

The inscription:

- 1 [...]P AYPHA[.....]
 (interspace between cornice and body of altar)
- 2 ΔΕΚΑΔΑΡΧΟC[.....]
- 3 ΑΝΕΘΗΚΕΝ Τῷ[.....]
- 4 ΕΤΟΥC ΜΤ

1) The first season of excavations took place in August 1981 under the direction of the writers of this article on behalf of the Institute of Archaeology of Tel-Aviv University and with the participation of D. Michaeli and M. Avi'am on behalf of the Mt. Meiron Field School, the Society for Protection of Nature. The architect of the expedition was G. Solar from Jerusalem. Also participating in the excavation were students of the Archaeology Division of the Department of Classical Studies of Tel-Aviv University and high school pupils from throughout the country. Our thanks go to Prof. M. Brawer, Dean of the Faculty of Humanities of Tel-Aviv University, for his assistance. We are grateful to Prof. Dr. R. Merkelbach for his valuable suggestions. A preliminary report on the site will be published shortly.

2) Measurements which were preserved: height - 0.52m.; length of side of the top surface - approx. 0.60m.; height of the cornice - 0.045m.; height of the slant of the cornice - 0.085m.; length of side of the body of the altar - 0.51m. (in the upper part); height of the body of the altar - 0.21m.

3) Measurements of the letters: average height - 0.02-0.03m.; average depth - 0.002-0.003m.

Line I: from this line five letters were clearly preserved as was an ivy-leaf, which in this case is used as an abbreviation mark,⁴⁾ and the remains of two additional letters, one on each side of the five distinct letters. Part of the letter P was preserved from the first word, before the ivy-leaf, making it possible to complete the word [Μά]ρ(κφ).⁵⁾ The second word, which was almost completely preserved, can be read as Αύρηλ[ι]φ. Although nearly half of the cornice is missing, it is possible to complete the line with the word 'Αντωνίνφ. The full name on the cornice was, therefore, [Μά]ρ(κφ) 'Αυρηλ[ι]φ 'Αντωνίνφ. The fact that the name is separated from the rest of the inscription emphasizes the importance of the person to whom the altar was dedicated. Hence, we may assume that the person concerned is the Emperor Caracalla. This is rather an unusual case. But in a dedicatory inscription found at Augusta Traiana, Bulgaria, the Emperor Caracalla, mentioned only as Antoninus, appears on the cornice, separated from the rest of the inscription, as in our altar.⁶⁾

Line II: this line refers to the dedicator of the altar, whose type of function, or place of service, is missing because of the break in the stone. The dedicator's title is δεκάδαρχος. This title reflects three types of functions familiar to us from several Greek inscriptions which were discovered in the Eastern part of the Roman Empire. Military function - as a cavalry officer.⁷⁾ Municipal function - as a council member of the city or some other settlement.⁸⁾ Function in the collegium - as a council member.⁹⁾ Δεκάδαρχος or δεκαδάρχης is identical to the Roman title decurio.¹⁰⁾ It is worth noting that in the Latin inscriptions of the same period, from the

4) The ivy-leaf (cf. R.Cagnat, *Cours d'épigraphie latine*, 4^e éd., 1914, 28) is used in Latin epigraphy as a word-divider; its use was taken over in Greek inscriptions under Roman influence and it is also sometimes used as an abbreviation mark, as in the present case.

5) Cf. M.Avi-Yonah, *The Quarterly of the Department of Antiquities in Palestine*, Suppl. to Vol.IX (1940) 83, s.v.

6) See: G.Mihailov (ed.), *Inscriptiones Graecae in Bulgaria Repertae*, III (1964), No.1557, Tabula 3.

7) Tiberias: SEG VIII, No.11; Gerasa: C.B.Welles, apud: C.H.Kraeling (ed.), *Gerasa-City of the Decapolis* (1938), No.52 (399); according to A.H.M. Jones, *JRS* 18 (1928), 152-3, No.13, it is a military function. Namara (Arabia): *IGRom*, III, No.1256. Kara Hüyük (Lykaonia): *MAMA VIII*(1962) No.94. Kötü Delik Han (Lykaonia): *ibid.*, Nr.327.

8) Hauran area (southern Syria): SEG, VII, No.1239. Additional inscriptions in which the δεκάδαρχος is of unspecified civilian character may be found in Hieria Sykaminium (Egypt): *IGRom*, I, No.1371; Saccaea (Syria): *IGRom*, III, No.1190; Smyrna: *IGRom*, IV, No.1458.

9) Thyatimis (Asia Minor): *IGRom*, IV, No.1221; unknown origin, now in Rome: *AE* 1957, No.25.

10) Cf. H.G.Liddle and R.Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon* (New ed. with Suppl.), 1968, s.v. δεκαδάρχω.

Eastern provinces, one frequently comes across the title *decurio* in the reference to the functions mentioned above.¹¹⁾ Unfortunately, the state of preservation of the inscription under discussion does not allow us to determine what type of *δεκάδραχος* is intended.

Line III: the most likely way of completing this line is *ἀνέθηκεν Τύ[χης βαμὸν]*. This completion of *Τύχης* is possible as a result of partial preservation of the *υ*. The possibility of completing this line *ἀνέθηκεν Τυ[ρίων βαμὸν]* seems to us less probable, because one would expect an altar of the Tyrians to be more grand and impressive than one uncovered by our excavation. As to *βαμὸν*, this word is to be found, sometimes with the word *ἀνέθηκεν* and sometimes without, on several altars from the Roman period;¹²⁾ the part of the facade of the altar, which we assume to be missing, also enables such a completion. This inscription cannot be regarded as conclusive proof of religious worship to the goddess *Τύχη* at Kadesh in the Roman period. It is more reasonable to assume that the dedication of the altar to the goddess is a result of the personal initiative of the same *δεκάδραχος*.

Line IV: this line contains the year of the dedication of the altar, namely 340: *ἔτους μτ´*. This date is in accordance with the era of Tyre which begins in October 126 B.C.E.¹³⁾ Hence, we see that the altar was dedicated in 214/215 C.E., in the reign of Caracalla. This is also supported by the mention of the Emperor by name at the head of the inscription. In addition to this, we know from historical sources that Kadesh was within the region of Tyre: *Κάδαα τῶν Τυρίων*.¹⁴⁾ This inscription is a further proof that the inhabitants of Roman Kadesh used the era of Tyre. It is possible to complete the inscription as follows:

11) See for example, the inscription from Baalbek and Beqa' published by C. Mondésert et J.-P. Rey-Coquais, *Inscriptions grecques et latines de la Syrie*, VI, (1967), Nos. 2716, 2743, 2778, 2791, 2793, 2794, 2942. For general references on the role of the *decurio* see: Daremberg-Saglio, *DAGR* II, 1 (1892) 40-41, s.v. *decurio*; Pauly-Wissowa, *RE* IV, 2 (1901), cols. 2319-2353, s.v. *decurio*.

12) A. Ovadiah, *Liber Annuus*, XXVI (1976) 180, 203; idem, *Eretz-Israel*, 12 (1975) 121 (Inscription No. 5) (Hebrew); Kraeling (ed.), op.cit. (supra n. 7), Nos. 7, 21, 26; SEG XXVII Nos. 716, 827; see also SIG I, No. 486; Mihailov (ed.), op.cit. (supra n. 6) IV (1966), Nos. 1935, 1988, 2119, 2240.

13) Cf. J.-P. Rey-Coquais, *Inscriptions grecques et latines découvertes dans les fouilles de Tyr (1963-1974)*, I: *Inscriptions de la nécropole*, (1977), 134f. Further discussion on additional inscriptions which were found in the past at Kadesh, and whose dating is based on the era of Tyre, will be included in the preliminary report on the excavations which will be published shortly.

14) Jos. BJ II, 459. See also: Jos. Ant., XIII, 154; Eusebius, *Onomasticon* (ed. Klostermann), 116, l. 10.

- 1 [Μᾶ]ρ(κφ) Αύρηλ[ι]φ 'Αντων[ίν]φ]
- 2 δεκάδαρχος[.....]
- 3 ἀνέθηκεν Τύ[χης βωμόν]
- 4 ἔτους μτ'

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Bemerkung der Herausgeber

Nach unserer Ansicht hat ein decurio namens M.Aurelius[-----] diesen Altar im 340. Jahr der tyrischen Aera geweiht:

[Μᾶ]ρ. Αύρηλι[ος]
δεκάδαρχος []
ἀνέθηκεν Τυ[ρίων]
ἔτους μτ'

Köln

Werner Eck
Reinhold Merkelbach